



THE NATURE OF VOLUNTEERING

Vol 1. No. 26

EXPLORE THE WONDERS OF NATURE - VOLUNTEER

Winter 2005

DID YOU KNOW ...

North American animals have numerous strategies for surviving the winter. Some migrate to warmer climates, others head for a long winter's nap, and some stay where they are and rely on fur, speed, fat, teeth, and claws to keep them safe, warm, and well fed. Here are some interesting nature facts:

- The Sea Otter has the densest, warmest fur on earth. One square inch of Sea Otter fur contains as many as 1 million hairs — that's about the same number of hairs on the heads of ten humans.

- Bears enter a protected area and sleep away the harshest part of the winter, but they *do not truly hibernate*, as their sleep is not deep, and their temperature falls only a few degrees below normal. Even Polar Bears retire to a den for part of the winter.

- The Snow Goose is named for its white color rather than its love of snow; it summers in the Arctic but heads to the coastal United States and southward for the winter. The Snowy Owl, on the other hand, can and does survive the winter in our most northerly climates.



**AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
REFUGES ...**

Wild Things

*where wildlife
comes naturally!*

Our Holiday Message

At this time of year, our attention traditionally turns towards giving and receiving gifts and reflecting on our blessings. It is also a time for expressing care and appreciation to those around us.

We are thankful for you, our wonderful friends, partners, and volunteers, for without your tireless work and loyalty many of our accomplishments would not have been possible this past year. Each one of you can take pride in the many ways you have made a positive difference.

We wish you and your loved ones the brightest and most memorable holiday season. May the new year bring you health, success and peace!

from your Friends at the Refuge

*Steve, Art, Jorge, Cindy,
Marty, Brian, Chris,
Vinny, Tom and Sandy*

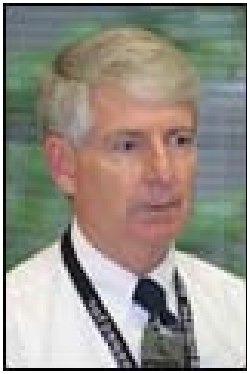


Come forth into the light of things.

Let Nature be your teacher. William Wordsworth

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CHIEF'S CORNER

Refuge System Chief Bill Hartwig

The Assurance We Will Be Around Forever

The *Banking on Nature 2004* report recently released is about more than the number of visitors

we welcome or their financial impact on the community - although both are important. The report is a look at how the Refuge System has evolved to meet the needs of a nation fascinated by wildlife but also swallowed up by subdivisions.

In 1951 we had about 3.5 million visitors. More than a half-century later, we welcome about 40 million visitors a year. Just think how the nation has changed. Forested land that once surrounded communities is covered by houses and apartment buildings. The neighborhood fishing hole is a 40-minute drive through bumper-to-bumper traffic. Wildlife watching too often means seeing a deer on the side of the road, victim to another collision. That's why the Refuge System is so important: it gives refuge to millions of people who are otherwise cut off from the natural world.

Of course, our primary concern is the conservation of wildlife habitat and wildlife species. People appreciate that the Refuge System represents a national pledge to protect our important lands and waters for future generations. They honor that pledge as much as we do. The challenge is to make sure we welcome new visitors without endangering the lands that bring them to us. We have already proven we can do just that.

Our outstanding educational and interpretive programs teach people how to respect the fragility of our natural resources, how to interact with nature without trampling it. Our small facilities enhancement program builds observation towers, photo blinds, boardwalks and more - bringing visitors to us, but keeping them at an appropriate distance. Our festivals, wildlife talks, guided tours and family programs translate scientific concepts into understandable language, and make concern for natural resources an everyday issue for millions.

The fact that national wildlife refuges have an economic payback for communities is an unanticipated benefit - but one worth heralding, especially since we return four times our annual operations and maintenance budget. *Banking on Nature 2004* reports that about 80 percent of our visitors travel at least 30 miles to see a national wildlife refuge. They think it's well worth the trip. Let's give them a huge welcome, and the assurance that we will be around forever.

Secretary Norton Applauds Confirmation of Dale Hall as Director

Interior Secretary Gale Norton applauded the Senate's confirmation of H. Dale Hall to be director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Dale Hall is an exceptional biologist with vast experience managing our nation's fish and wildlife resources, from the Everglades to the old growth forests of the Pacific Northwest to the high desert of the Southwest," Norton said. "He will be an outstanding director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as we seek more effective ways to conserve and restore our nation's fish and wildlife and their habitat."



A holiday message from our Interior Secretary

As we wind down the work engine and start to think about some quality time with our friends and loved ones, I want to tell each and every one of you how honored and thankful I am to have the privilege of being your Director. The Fish and Wildlife Service family is special. Not because we are better or somehow more caring than others, but because we understand how important it is to depend on each other, both on the job and in life's challenges. The year has brought us both joys and sadness. We have celebrated with each other when happiness entered our lives, and we have shared tears when the burdens seemed too great to bear. But through it all, there was never a doubt we were there for each other.

When I sit down with my family to enjoy life's blessings, I will be remembering those we have lost from our family this year. It is never easy to understand why these things happen, but we must continue to be there for their families and remember them in our prayers. I will also think about our employees that are either without their pre-hurricane homes or are making do while major repairs are still incomplete. I will be thinking about our military family that is in harms way doing their part to ensure our freedom. And, finally, I will be thinking of all of you and praying for a healthy and safe year to come.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hannakuh, Ramadan or some other holiday during this holy time, the most important thing is to remember it is neither our similar or different beliefs that make us strong; it is our commitment to each other and the natural resources we love. So, may the blessings of the season be with all of you and yours, and thank you for all you do every day of the year. Dale

Refuge Species Profile - Forsythe NWR's Salt Marsh Rallidae

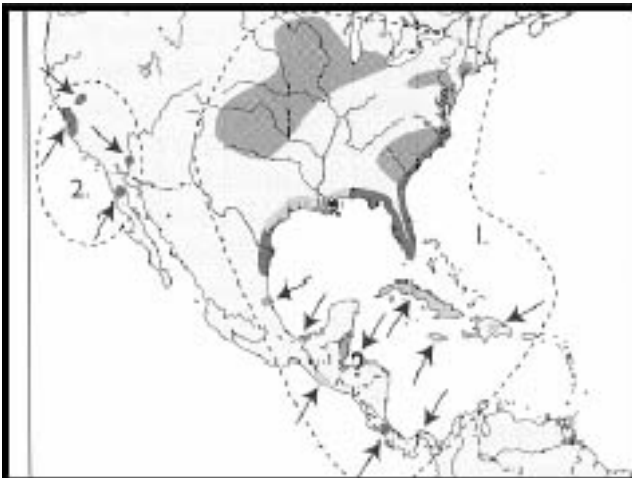
by Jorge Coppen, Wildlife Biologist

This is the third in a 3-part series reviewing the life history of species noted in the purposes for which the refuge was established.

Known for its unique "kee-kee-do" call, the eastern Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis jamaicensis*) can be found from Connecticut to Florida. Seldom seen, it represents a tough bird to study. Little is known about the breeding behavior of this species. Nests are well hidden in clumps of vegetation and are often slightly elevated from the ground. Both sexes incubate eggs and brood chicks for a short period of time after hatching.

Likely due to wetland habitat losses throughout its range, the species exhibits a globally declining population trend and a current status of 25,000 - 100,000 within its range. It is considered among the highest for conservation concern within the western hemisphere. Threats to breeding populations include continued loss and degradation of suitable wetland habitats. About half of the historical coastal wetlands have been filled or drained along the eastern coastline. Ditching of salt marshes, alteration of water regimes that encourages invasive plants, burning of marshes, susceptibility to disturbance such as grazing and agriculture, contamination of wetlands by toxic agents, lining of irrigation canals all contribute to the decline. Spraying of marshes for insect control has unknown effect on rails and their prey. Avian predators including herons, owls, gulls and northern harriers pose a threat to breeding success. Mammals including domestic cats and foxes also pose a threat.

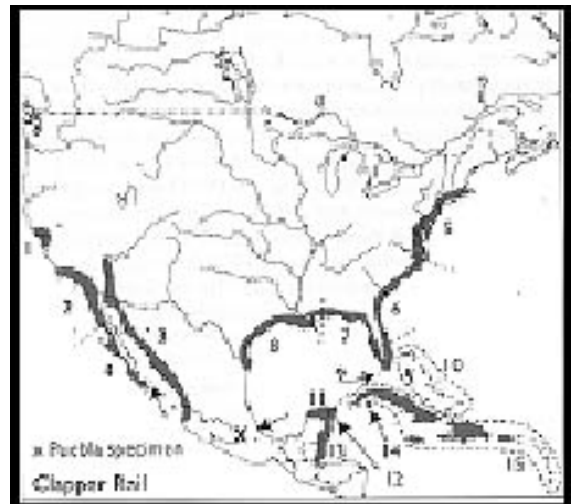
Black Rails inhabit both freshwater and saltwater marshes, and avoid habitat that is affected by daily tidal action, preferring areas that do not flood regularly. Birds fleeing flooded areas are more susceptible to predation. Rails consume insects, mollusks, amphipods and other invertebrates and even some seeds.



Range of the eastern Black Rail.

Clapper Rails (*Rallus longirostris crepitans*) primarily inhabit salt marshes in the immediate vicinity of the Atlantic shore. Clappers are not often seen inland or on freshwater marshes, unless when forced out during high tides. As solitary ground nesters, this species nests in salt and brackish marshes. A typical clutch would include 7-11 buff or olive-buff eggs in a basket-shaped nest of aquatic vegetation or tidal wrack, hidden on a firm bank or under a small bush. The breeding range of the Clapper Rail on the east coast extends from New Hampshire south to the Florida Keys and Caribbean Islands, and along the Gulf Coast to Texas. Southern populations are year-round residents. Northern populations winter in the southern part of the breeding range. Those migrants that leave the south for a season, reach the New Jersey marshes about mid-April, and return to winter in the south about early October. In terms of feeding habits they are generalists and "opportunistic", but prefer crustaceans if available. The Clapper Rail forages mainly by shallow probing of sediment or surface gleaning. Their diet includes small crabs, other crustaceans, slugs, insects, small mammals and birds, small fish, and eggs.

Clappers exhibit a stable population trend but a population status of unknown size. These birds are considered as having moderate conservation concern within the western hemisphere. Threats to breeding include wetland habitat loss and degradation in the eastern US and loss of eggs and young caused by high tides associated with storms. Factors affecting populations include territoriality, predation, competition with Laughing Gulls and pesticides. While Clapper Rails are hunted in east and gulf coastal states, hunter interest and harvest in the US appear to be low and declining.



Rails (continued on page 7)

A WORD FROM OUR FRIENDS

The Friends of Forsythe NWR is a non-profit group established in 1998 to provide support and services to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in Oceanville, New Jersey. Our goals are:



- Promoting a better understanding of the natural history and environment of Southern New Jersey, the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR and the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Helping to preserve and enhance the wildlife habitat at this Refuge, and to assist the Refuge, the Refuge System and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a variety of educational and supportive efforts.

Please consider joining the Friends of Forsythe and help us accomplish these goals. Call 609-748-1535 or visit www.friendsofforsythe.org

Educational Committee

The first meeting of the Environmental Education Committee was held on December 6. Members include Arlene Petruska, Betsy Griffiths, Ed Bristow, Jackie Sarner, JoAnn McEnerney, Kris Arcuri, Mary Lenahan, and Roz Herlands. This recently formed committee will be focusing on planning interpretation and learner-centered educational activities for people of all ages, based on the objectives of the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

If you are interested in joining the committee, the next meeting will be January 7th at 11 a.m. at refuge headquarters.

Beyond the Boundaries Workshop

The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), in cooperation with The Conservation Fund, hosted a workshop for 30 refuge Friends groups at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. The workshop focused on threats to refuges from beyond refuge boundaries.

The Friends of Forsythe, represented by Ed Bristow and Al Martens, were among the 30 select groups invited to attend.

The workshop follows a report issued by the NWRA in August highlighting refuge threats and successes arising from issues beyond refuge boundaries. The "State of the System: Beyond the Boundaries" report (available at www.refugenet.org) kicked off a new initiative designed to generate community awareness about the need to protect areas around our national wildlife refuges and action to protect these areas. Land uses that go on outside refuge boundaries have a direct impact on the quality of conservation inside the refuge.

The Beyond the Boundaries workshop educated 60 participants (two from each of the 30 participating Friends groups), with a range of speakers, including refuge managers, academics, and Assistant Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett, among others. The workshop was made possible by grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, New-Land Foundation and Beneficia Foundation.



The Stay Focused Photo Club is fortunate to be able to use the Refuge auditorium the second Saturday of every month for our meetings. The facilities allow us to have programs with guest speakers, and frequently we make use of slide projectors, and computer demonstrations, and we can also have competitions with special equipment and lighting.

At our October meeting, we had a special program highlighting three speakers: Mike Sciuillo, Denny Coleman (owner of Northfield MotoPhoto), and Joe Lomax. We didn't have the best of weather, preventing us from taking our hands-on photo session out onto the Refuge as planned, but we had a great turnout and got several new members as a result of that exceptional meeting.

On October 29 several members of the club met at the Philadelphia Zoo for one of our photo expeditions. We didn't realize when we planned this trip that it would be a special day at the zoo - a Halloween extravaganza that brought out multitudes of children dressed in costumes. The festive atmosphere at the zoo was fun, but all the parking lots were full and we had to hike quite a way to get into the zoo!

In November we held our Second Annual Refuge Shootout. No, we aren't using firearms for snow geese population control - we are presenting our best photos, all taken on the Refuge, for a juried competition. We had some extraordinary photos - great shots of egrets, geese, trees, milkweed, and stunning landscapes. For a second time, the best of show entry was a black and white print. Check out the winners at our website: www.stayfocusedphotoclub.com.

In December we always have a convivial potluck dinner to celebrate the year's end. The food rivals any gourmet restaurant.

If you are interested in photography, especially of wildlife and the natural world, come visit us at one of our monthly meetings at the Refuge auditorium. Check our website for the monthly program. We welcome newcomers!

Mariann Davis
Secretary, Stay Focused Photo Club

LE CORNER



Welcome to the Refuge Law Enforcement Corner, A.K.A. - L.E. Corner. This **new** (does anybody know how long we can keep calling this new?) section of the newsletter is dedicated to informing readers how refuge law enforcement here at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge is working to uphold the mission of the Refuge System. We hope you will enjoy these tid-bits of information, stories, and other stuff that come to mind and passed along by the Office of Refuge Law Enforcement.

New Orleans - Hurricane Katrina Disaster Response



Last issue we mentioned that Refuge Officer Chris Pancila was sent to New Orleans, along with the rest of the Region 5 Special Operations and Response Team (SORT) for an extended detail to help with the hurricane relief effort. Chris returned to Forsythe safe and sound and the thought that Refuge officers made a difference in people's lives. He writes the following to share his thoughts with all the hard working refuge volunteers.

There are few words to describe the experience of assisting with disaster relief operations in the city of New Orleans, but the one that does come to mind more often than not is "interesting". I say this because it is hard to put into words the amount of destruction that was present in the city, from flooded areas (10 feet plus) to sections that looked like a small nuclear device was detonated. Many feelings and emotions go through ones head and soul while being in this situation, the paramount one being gratefulness for what you have in life. In saying this I just don't mean the material possessions we all sometimes judge our happiness on, but for family, friends and what I believe is true human nature - compassion for one another. In the five weeks that other Fish and Wildlife Officers and

myself spent in New Orleans we were able to see the many sides of the human animal, but the one human attribute I will take away from this experience is the way that people can come together and help one another in the most difficult of situations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can be proud of the work their employees did there, and we can all take some satisfaction in the way Americans respond when called upon; whether it was volunteering time as a Red Cross worker, donating money/clothes/food to help disaster victims or just sending good thoughts.

Refuge Officers Investigate Arson



On November 16, 2005 at approximately 1830 hours, the NJ State Forest Fire Service responded to a fire on what use to be the old Forked River Game Farm site, now part of the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR Barnegat Division. When the fire warden arrived at the scene, the badly vandalized historic Woodmansie house was fully involved with fire. The Forked River Volunteer Fire Department responded along with several other local fire companies and soon had the fire under control despite heavy winds. The following day Refuge Officers Brian Willard and Chris Pancila responded to the scene to investigate, along with agents from the Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms Agency, Ocean County Fire Marshals and Prosecutor's Office, Lacey Township Police, and the Ocean County Sheriffs Department. The cause of the fire is believed to have been arson. The criminal investigation into who might have started the fire is still on-going, with new leads being uncovered and followed up on by Refuge Officers and Lacey Township Police Detectives.

Community Meeting

On September 8th, acting Barnegat Division Manager Vinny Turner along with Refuge Officer Brian Willard attended a community meeting at the VFW in Brick. The meeting was hosted by Willie DeCamp of Save Barnegat Bay. The topic was the Reedy Creek Division of the Forsythe Refuge. Topics of discussion were targeted at management, land acquisition, and law enforcement. Enforcement issues included illegal off-road vehicle use, after-hour use, and dumping. There were about 30 people in attendance including refuge volunteers. Refuge Officers are developing measures to deal with these issues.

We hope everyone has a wonderful and safe Holiday Season!

Howlin' Holiday Quiz

Test your seasonal "snow-how"!



1. Adelie Penguins and Santa Claus both:

- A. Live in the North Pole.
- B. Make a long yearly migration.
- C. Enjoy a snowy climate.
- D. B and C.



2. Ice bears are well adapted for the frigid winter holidays because:

- A. They rarely overheat.
- B. They have an insulating layer of blubber about 4 inches thick.
- C. They have lower than average body temperatures.
- D. They hang out with Mrs. Claus by the fireplace.
- E. B and C.

3. Which has the potential to be environmentally unfriendly this Hanukkah?

- A. Using conventional Menorah candles with lead-tainted wicks.
- B. Buying bags of plastic (PVC enhanced) dreidels.
- C. Making organic potato latkes.
- D. Wrapping gifts with newspaper, scarves, or outdated maps.
- E. A and B.

4. What shape are snowflakes?

- A. Octagons.
- B. Hexagons.
- C. Pentagons.
- D. They vary.

5. Snowy owls do what around Kwanzaa and Christmas?

- A. Burrow in the Arctic tundra with a cup of cocoa.
- B. Enjoy a lazy hibernation with polar bears.
- C. Travel south to the Great Plains of Canada & the US.
- D. Decorate trees with colorful berries & feathers.

6. Which of the following proves Santa exists?

- A. Although no known species of reindeer can fly, there are 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified, one of which could be the reindeer that Santa and a few privileged others have seen.
- B. Since Santa does not give loot to Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Buddhist children, his workload is reduced by 15%.
- C. Santa has not 24, but 31 hours to work with, thanks to different time zones and rotation of the earth.
- D. Although all the above data is correct, it fails to prove anything.

By Kim Master and Hilary Stamper
<http://www.care2.com/community/trivia>

Wild Things Wing Ding!

There were some pretty *wild* things going on at the Refuge in spite of some not-so-nice weather on Saturday, October 22, as staff and volunteers celebrated National Wildlife Refuge week and Make a Difference Day with an open house. Gray clouds filled the sky as



visitors arrived, but adventurous souls found this silver lining. As the wind picked up and the rain came steadily down at a heavy pace, it seemed as if even the wildlife was looking for Noah and his Ark!

Many thanks to our friends and partners who put on a smile and stuck in out in spite of the weather: Alliance for a Living



Photo by Karin Kils

Ocean, Atlantic Audubon, Atlantic County Utilities Authority, Barnegat Bay National Estuary Program, Cape Atlantic Conservation District, Cooper Environmental Center, Decoy



Carver Dave Rhodes, Friends of Forsythe NWR, Leave No Trace stations, New Jersey Endangered & Nongame Species Program, Ocean County Parks and Recreation, Philadelphia Zoo, Richard Stockton College, Stay Focused Photography Club, and the Wetlands Institute

Photos courtesy of Rita Rechsteiner



Make a Difference Day

Rain also didn't keep our Make a Difference Day participants away - about 50 Cub Scouts, Brownies, their siblings and parents helped clean up at the Refuge. The cleanups were sponsored by Galloway Township Clean Communities and the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR. Many thanks to all who helped make this event a success again this year.



photo by Carol Bruskin

Photos courtesy of Stay Focused Photo Club



Jorge Coppen, Refuge Biologist



Refuge Biologist Jorge Coppen Receives an Early Birthday Present

By Cindy Heffley

Jorge Coppen, our Wildlife Biologist for the past five years, recently accepted a position with the Washington Office as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan National Coordinator. Jorge will be stationed at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland. Since 1989, Jorge dreamed of working in the position. His start date is February 5 just six days before his birthday.

While talking to Jorge recently, he told me that Forsythe has been one of the top three jobs he's ever had. Although he had never visited Forsythe before, he always wanted to work here partly because of Black Ducks being an integral part of the history of the refuge. Once he arrived, Jorge dug in and provided much expertise in many areas. One of the most noticeable accomplishments he can be praised for is the way he took charge of the water levels in the impoundments. This year the refuge has seen numbers of waterfowl not seen in many years. Jorge has also completed countless other behind-the-scenes projects. "I'd like to thank those who befriended me during my time here", Jorge recently said. "I'd especially like to thank Doug Kellner for being my most reliable volunteer. He's definitely been a rock. I'd also like to thank Jim Cavallo for all the help with bird surveys and all the other volunteers who have helped with a variety of projects. Without you, it would be difficult to complete the many missions we have."

Jorge will be missed by many of the staff and volunteers here at the refuge. Hopefully his position will be replaced with someone who has as much passion for the mission of the refuge as he has. We'll keep you posted.

Rails (continued from page 3)

Range of the Clapper Rail

Encompassing some 46,000 acres and 50 miles of Jersey coastline (and consisting of 78% salt marsh habitats), Forsythe NWR serves as a critical local sanctuary and inviolate refuge for these secretive birds of the marsh. Forsythe NWR participates in a monitoring program entitled "*Unified Strategy for Monitoring Changes in Abundance of Terrestrial Birds Associated with North American Tidal Marshes*".

We participate to help increase our understanding of salt marshes and the species they support because rising sea levels and increased mosquito control efforts pose immediate threats to many salt marsh systems in North America. We have information on the current status of bird populations within only a few of the tidal systems in North America, and we lack appropriate data to compare avian abundance among tidal wetlands with any sort of confidence. In contrast, we have over 30 years of count data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) for assessing population trends for several hundred species of landbirds. However, the BBS does not adequately sample birds in marshes.

This strategy outlines standardized survey methods that also focus on saltmarsh passerines such that these data can be collected simultaneously with surveys focusing on secretive marsh birds. The strategy also provides a standardized survey protocol for those only interested in surveying saltmarsh passerines. Standardization of this sort will allow data from surveys focusing on salt marsh passerines to be easily pooled with data from surveys focusing on secretive marsh birds. Implementing these standardized surveys in salt marshes across North America will help document regional and continental patterns in distribution and abundance of all birds associated with tidal marshes.

UPCOMING EVENTS

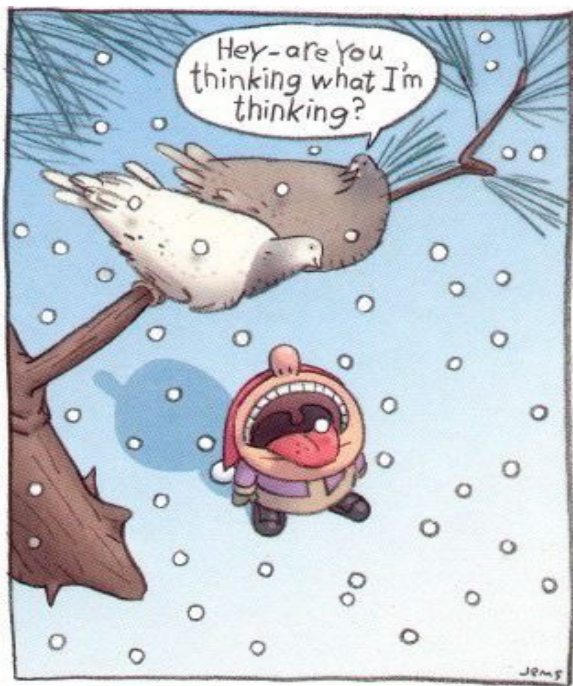


Stay Focused Photo Club meets the second Saturday of each month at 10 am in the Refuge auditorium.

Saturday, January 7 - 11 a.m. Environmental Education Committee meeting at refuge headquarters. Anyone interested in helping is welcome to attend.

Saturday, April 22 - 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Kids Fishing Derby at Patriot Lake (Galloway Township). Volunteers needed to help with this fun and rewarding event. Call Sandy for more information.

Coming in **May - Annual Volunteer Dinner**. This year will be a sit-down dinner at a local restaurant. Keep tuned ...



Answers to the Howlin' Holiday Quiz on page 6:
 1-C. Enjoy a snowy climate. 2-B. They have an insulating layer of blubber about 4 inches thick. 3-E. A and B. 4-B. Hexagons.
 5.-C. Travel south to the Great Plains of Canada & the U.S. 6-D. Although all the above data is correct, it fails to prove anything.

WHO'S ON STAFF?

Project Leader
 STEVE ATZERT

Deputy Project Leader
 VACANT

Acting Refuge Manager
 Barnegat Division
 VINNY TURNER

Chief of Visitor Services
 ART WEBSTER

Biologists
 JORGE COPPEN, VINNY TURNER

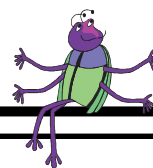
Refuge Law Enforcement Officers
 BRIAN WILLARD, CHRIS PANCILA

Administrative
 Officer
 MARTHA HAND

Visitor Services
 Manager
 CINDY HEFFLEY

Volunteer Coordinator
 SANDY PERCHETTI

Maintenance Professionals
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